

Cervical Cancer Screening and Prevention

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
National Center for HIV, STD, & TB Prevention
Division of STD Prevention



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Acknowledgements

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You may visit these organizations online at:

- <http://www.thegcf.org/>
- <http://www.cervicalcancercampaign.org/>

About This Presentation

- **In this presentation, you will learn about old and new methods of cervical cancer screening**
- **We hope that this presentation will help women to take an active part in their health**
- **It does not replace a doctor's diagnosis or treatment**

Cervical Cancer Screening and Prevention

- **You can prevent cervical cancer with screening.**
- **Screening is the search for diseases, such as cancer, in people without symptoms.**
- **Screening has saved thousands of lives.**
- **You should get screened for cervical cancer on a regular basis.**
- **Cervical cancer can be prevented!**

You Can Prevent Cervical Cancer

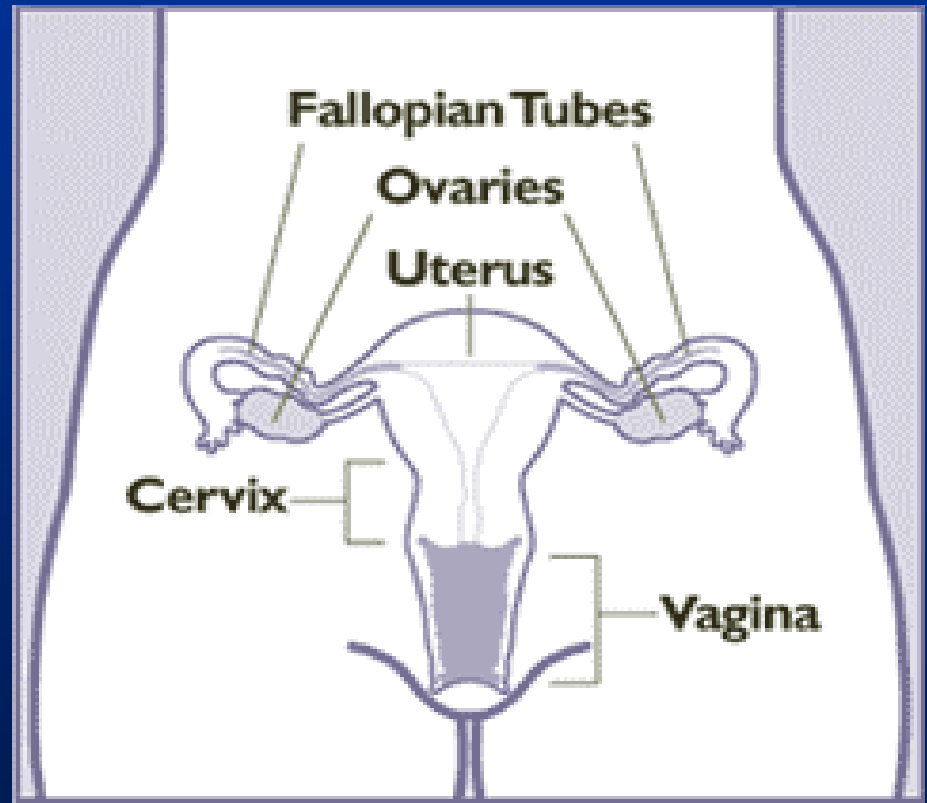
In the U.S., it is estimated that in 2004:

- **About 10,520 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer**
- **About 3,900 women will die of cervical cancer**

Source: American Cancer Society

What is the Cervix [*ser-vix*]?

- The cervix is one of the female organs
- Other female organs include the:
 - ♦ Vulva [*vul-vah*]
 - ♦ Vagina [*ve-juy-nah*]
 - ♦ Uterus [*yoo-tuh-ris*]
 - ♦ Fallopian tubes [*fuh-loh-pee-an toobs*]
 - ♦ Ovaries [*o-vuh-reez*]



What is cervical cancer?

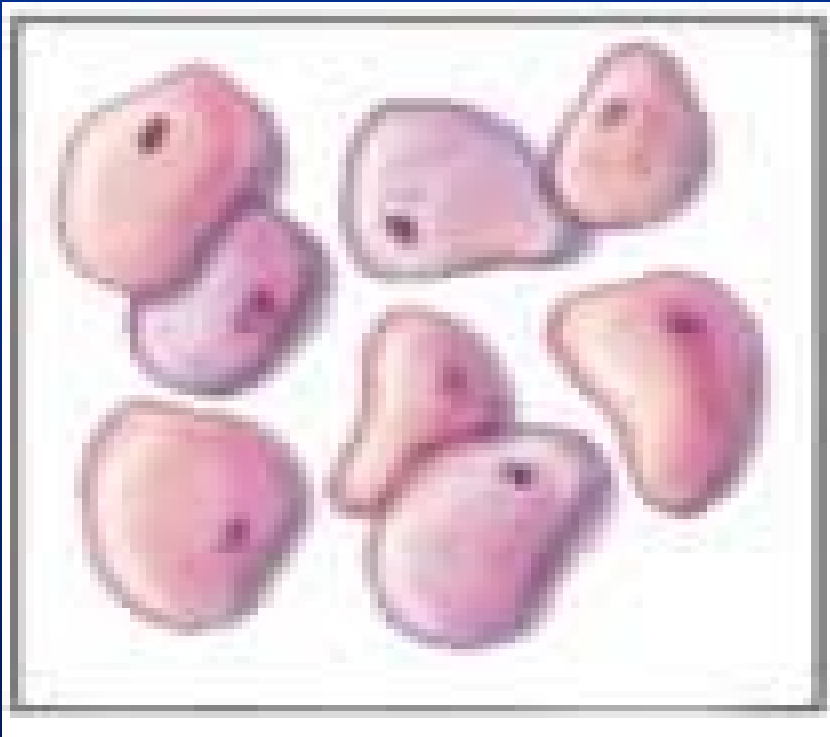
- Cancer of one of the female organs (cervix)
- The easiest female cancer to prevent through screening

What is a Pap test?

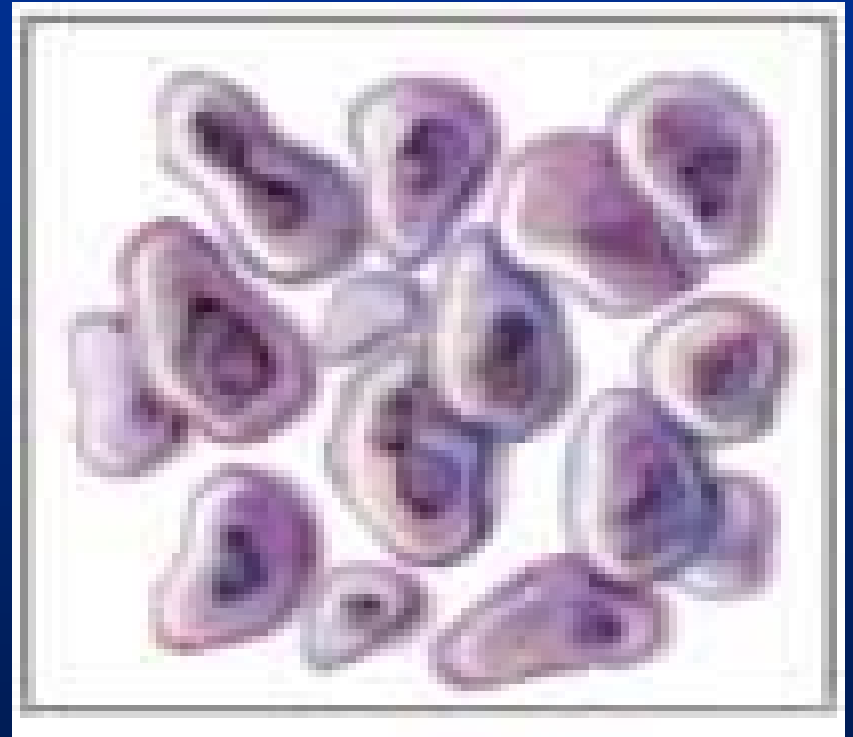
- Cells are collected from the surface of your cervix by a doctor
- These cells are then checked under a microscope for any abnormalities
- If abnormal (or *precancerous*) cells are found, they can be treated *before* they turn into cancer
- Cervical cancer can be found in the early stages, when it is easier to treat

Finding early cell changes

Normal cervical cells



Precancer cells



What a Pap test is NOT:

- A pelvic exam
- A test for ovarian or uterine cancer
- A biopsy (“*buy-op-see*”), or procedure where a needle is used to remove cells to study
- A test for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)

Most cervical cancer can be prevented

- **Cervical cancer is very rare in women who get regular Pap tests**

What causes cervical cancer?

The main cause of cervical cancer is genital infection with Human Papillomavirus [*pap·il·lo·ma·vi·rus*] or HPV

- Genital HPV is a virus that is spread by sex
- You could have been infected with HPV years ago but only recently had it found on a test
- There are many different types of HPV
- Certain “high-risk” HPV types can cause cell changes and cervical cancer

How common is HPV?

- **Most men and women who have had sex have been exposed to HPV**
- **Most sexually active women (at least 80%) have been exposed to HPV by age 50**

How do I Know if I am at risk for HPV?

- Anyone who has ever had sex is at risk for HPV

Who is at higher risk for HPV?

- **Anyone who has had more than one sex partner**
- **Anyone whose sex partner(s) has had more than one sex partner**

How do I know if I have HPV?

- Abnormal Pap test results are often a sign of HPV
- HPV DNA test can find high-risk HPV types

If I have HPV, does it mean I will get cancer?

- **No! Most people get HPV infection, but very few get cervical cancer**
- **In most cases, HPV infection goes away on its own**
- **Sometimes, the HPV infection does not go away after many years. This type is called “persistent”. It can lead to cervical cancer**

If I have HPV, does it mean my partner has been unfaithful?

- **No! HPV is not a sign of unfaithfulness**
- **It is not possible to know when you got HPV or who gave it to you**
- **You may have had HPV for many years before it shows up**

Who is at risk for cervical cancer?

- **Women who do not have Pap tests**
- **Women who do not follow up after Pap tests, as told by their doctor**
- **Women who have persistent HPV**
- **Women who smoke**

Who is at risk for cervical cancer?

- **Women with immune problems**
 - ★ **HIV**
 - ★ **Transplanted organs**
 - ★ **Steroid medications**
 - ★ **Chemotherapy**
- **Women whose mothers took the drug, DES**

How do I lower my risk of getting cervical cancer?

- Get regular Pap tests and follow up, if necessary
- Limit your number of sex partners
- Choose a sex partner who has had no or few prior sex partners
- Do not smoke cigarettes
- Keep a healthy diet and lifestyle
- Use condoms consistently and correctly during sexual activity

What will a Pap test tell me?

That the cells in your cervix are...

- **Normal**
- **Abnormal:**
 - ♦ **Minor cell changes of unknown importance, possibly unrelated to precancer (ASCUS)**
 - ♦ **Minor cell changes**
 - ♦ **Moderate cell changes**
 - ♦ **Severe cell changes**
- **Possibly cancerous**

How common are abnormal Pap test results?

- **Abnormal Pap test results are quite common**
- **They are usually only slightly abnormal**
- **If followed up and treated early, you can prevent the abnormality from turning into cervical cancer**

When do I need my first Pap test?

- No more than 3 years after you first have sex
- No later than age 21

How often do I need a Pap test?

- Every year until age 30
- After age 30, if you have had only normal results, you may have them every 2 to 3 years (after talking with your health care provider about your level of risk)

Why do I need to keep getting tested?

- **Just like mammogram screening, Pap testing is not a one-time test**
- **The test is not perfect**
- **New changes (abnormalities) can occur after you get tested, even if you have not had new partners**
- **It could take many years for changes to develop or to be noticed**
- **Your risk changes if you have new partners, or if your partner has other partners**

When can I stop having Pap tests?

- **Around the age of 65 or 70, if you are not otherwise at high risk for cervical cancer**

I feel fine, so why do I need a Pap test?

- **A Pap test can find changes of the cervix (precancer) when you may not have symptoms or notice a problem**

What can I do to make my Pap test as accurate as possible?

- **Schedule your Pap test when you are not having a menstrual period**
- **Do not have sex for 2 days before the test**
- **Do not douche for 2 days before the test**
- **Do not use tampons, birth control foams, jellies, or other vaginal creams and medications for 2 days before the test**

What Should I Expect When I Have a Pap Test?

- **You lie down on a special exam table**
- **Your feet are placed in stirrups (foot holders)**
- **A speculum (thin duck-billed instrument) is inserted into your vagina and opened**
- **This allows your health care provider to see your cervix...**

What Should I Expect When I Have a Pap Test?

- **A small spatula, brush, or cotton-tipped swab is used to rub and remove cells from the cervix**
- **A sample of cells is put on a slide or vial**
- **You may feel a little uncomfortable, but the test is quick**
- **You may have some spotting (light bleeding) afterward**

How do I find out about my Pap test results?

- You can ask to have a copy mailed to you
- You can call for your results
- If you have an abnormal result, it is extremely important to show up for follow-up appointments and get the recommended testing
- Even after a normal Pap test, it is still important to report any symptoms of abnormal vaginal bleeding, discharge, or pain to your health care provider

Do I need a Pap test if I had a hysterectomy?

- **If you had treatment for precancer or cancer of the cervix, you may still need a Pap test**
- **If the cervix was left in place at the time of your hysterectomy, you will still need Pap tests**
- **Preventive health care is still important, even if you do not need a Pap test**

What is new in cervical cancer screening and prevention?

- Liquid-based Pap
- Combination of HPV test and Pap test for women 30 years of age and older
- HPV test for women with ASCUS
- Vaccines for HPV currently being tested

Important Points to Remember:

- Regular Pap tests are the best way to prevent cervical cancer
- Getting an abnormal Pap test result does NOT mean you have cancer
- Getting a positive HPV test result does NOT mean you have cancer
- Getting a positive HPV test result is NOT a sign of unfaithfulness

These results mean you are finding a potential problem now, before it is too late

Take Control of Your Health

- **Make an appointment to get a Pap test today**

How do I get my friend to have a Pap test?

- Tell her about the importance of preventing cervical cancer
- Tell her it doesn't hurt
- Help her find the right health care provider
- Help her make an appointment
- Offer her a ride
- Offer help with child care

Screening Resources

For a free or low-cost Pap test:

<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/contacts.htm>

Other Resources:

- **CDC Division of Cancer Prevention & Control**
http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/cc_basic.htm

American Cancer Society **www.cancer.org**

National Cancer Institute (NIH) **www.cancer.gov**

Citations

- ACS. (last revised January 2005). Detailed Guide: Cervical Cancer. What are the Key Statistics About Cervical Cancer? (Online)
- CDC. (January 2004). *Report to Congress: Prevention of Genital Human Papillomavirus Infection.*
- CDC. (2004). Genital HPV Infection Fact Sheet. (Online)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *Healthy People 2010, Vol 1-2, 2nd Ed.* Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.